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Blessings for All? Community-Based Ecotourism in Bali Between Global, National, and Local Interests – A Case Study

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As a major island destination in South-East Asia, Bali has won a global reputation as one of the last paradises on earth. As one of the largest industries in the world, global tourism is utilised by the governments of many developing countries as an agent for development and national integration. However, local communities level the criticism that mass tourism has not only brought economic growth but also caused ecological and social costs. In reaction to the excessive developments of the past decades, local Balinese have started to actively implement community-based tourism. The ecotourism village-network Jaringan Ekowisata Desa seeks a more sustainable approach to tourism through stronger ownership and the minimisation of negative ecological impacts. The case study presented is based on fieldwork which took place in 2010. It aims to find answers to the questions of whether and to what extent community-based ecotourism initiatives may constitute a sustainable alternative to the negative effects associated with mass tourism.

Keywords: Bali, Ecotourism, Community, Sustainability, Agriculture

Bali gilt innerhalb der Tourismusindustrie als Inbegriff von Exotik und als eines der letzten Paradiese auf Erden. Seit jeher werden die vielfältigen Auswirkungen des Tourismus auf der Insel kontrovers diskutiert. Während vornehmlich Eliten an der in nationalem Interesse forcierten Tourismusentwicklung der südostasiatischen Top-Destination profitieren, kritisiert die einheimische Bevölkerung unzureichende Mitspracherechte und die Vernachlässigung von Nachhaltigkeitskriterien. In Reaktion wurden seitens der Balinesen Projekte des gemeindebasierten Tourismus ins Leben gerufen. Das Ökotourismus-Dorf-Netzwerk Jaringan Ekowisata Desa ist eine solche Initiative, die sich der lokalen Eigentümerschaft und der Minimierung negativer ökologischer Folgen verschreibt. Anhand der hier präsentierten Fallstudie zu dem zivilgesellschaftlichen Projekt soll beantwortet werden, inwiefern gemeindebasierter Ökotourismus eine Alternative zu den in Zusammenhang mit Massentourismus in Verbindung gebrachten Übeln darstellt.

Schlagworte: Bali, Ökotourismus, Gemeinde, Nachhaltigkeit, Landwirtschaft

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1. Bali and the Making of an Indonesian Tourism Destination

The tropical island of Bali is considered one of the last paradises on earth. The images associated with it combine traits of ancient Indian civilisations with the erotic mystery of the South Seas (Vickers, 1989, p. 1). Blessed with spectacular landscapes, smooth beaches, limestone cliffs, deep forests, and lush rice terraces on the volcanic slopes of majestic and still active Mount Agung, the island is located in the midst of the mega-diverse archipelago of Indonesia (Dalem, 2002, p. 85). Bali has not only earned its fame through its superb setting but also with its unique culture and people, well-known for their artistic talents and great virtuosity in flamboyant dances and ceremonies. For almost a century tourists have been attracted to the island, making the province today better known than the Republic of Indonesia it belongs to (Picard, 1996, p. 11). Since the early explorers, anthropologists, artists, and officials of the Dutch colonial regime had settled here, there have been apprehensions about the future of the island. In 1928 Genin feared that the name of Bali would “remain the reminiscence of a lost paradise when the green of the gentle hills disappears, giving way to factories and chimneys” (Genin, 1928, pp. 216-217, author’s translation).

With affordable long haul travel in the developed countries after World War II, Bali has throughout the past decades evolved as one of South-East Asia’s most frequented island destinations. Since the birth of the Republic of Indonesia in the 1950s, the government has built on the exotic images of the 1920s to promote tourism with the aim of national and economic development (Dowling, 2000, p. 3). At the end of the 1960s the official strategy for Bali was ‘cultural tourism’ in combination with a large-scale enclave resort concept at Nusa Dua on the southernmost Bukit peninsula. Through the use of predefined excursion routes the Balinese were supposed to be protected from the direct impact of tourism. The donor-funded master plan and the Nusa Dua project were intended as countermeasures against anticipated ‘ills’ of uncontrolled development, which however, still occurred at many other places on the island (Wong, 2004, p. 423). The extensive Kuta-Legian strip along the south-western coast with thousands of hospitality facilities is just one such example. Despite its intentions, both the concept of ‘cultural tourism’ and the concentration strategy became heavily criticised and finally abandoned in 1988 (Hobart, Ramseyer, & Leemann, 2001, p. 216; Picard, 1996, pp. 46-47, p. 49 & p. 75; Shepperd, 2001, p. 75; Waldner, 1998,

p. 122). Despite a moratorium and lower than predicted arrival figures, a construction boom in the 1990s led to several controversial mega-projects, such as the Bali Nirwana Resort and the Garuda Wisnu Kencana project ². These projects were even more heavily criticised than their predecessor model, the Nusa Dua venture.

2. Mass Tourism Versus Alternative Tourism in Bali

A new generation of public intellectuals, activists, environmentalists, artists, and religious and community leaders had begun opposing the capitalist lobbies, investors, and elites from Jakarta that were backed by the local and national governments. The elites were criticised for benefiting from the projects while the local population bore the ecological and social costs (Howe, 2005, p. 17; Picard, 2003, p. 109; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008, p. 205). Throughout the 1990s an increase from one to two million international direct arrivals occurred. The two-and-a-half million arrivals of today stand against the backdrop of the unresolved question of the carrying capacity of the island which is with three-and-a-half million inhabitants densely populated (Picard, 2009, p. 101). By the 1990s tourism was perceived as an industry that marginalised the people (Picard, 2003, p. 112). Some of the abovementioned civil society actors among the Balinese were calling for the preservation of their 'Balineseness' (*Kebalian*) – a term that had for example taken new turns under the name *Ajeg Bali* (Bali Erect), a movement that can be traced back to the early beginnings of tourism under the 'gaze' of the Dutch in colonial times (Hitchcock & Putra 2007, p. 114; Koch, 2007, p. 90; Picard, 2003, p. 111 & p. 195). It addresses the issue of an outsider arriving on the shores and gaining control: a common theme also among Pacific island societies such as those in Tahiti and Hawaii (Reuter, 1999, p. 163). As the proto-destination of Indonesia, Bali developed under technocrats and conglomerates in the 'national interest', and decisions were made by the national government in the capital city. Critics had often caricatured the island as having become "Jakarta's colony" (Suasta & Connor, 1999, p. 101; Aditjondro, 1995). A major concern among local people who had raised their voice was that control had been taken over by the global tourism industry, and that the development and the future of Bali is no longer controlled by the Balinese themselves,

² The former is a luxury golf resort perched above the important sea temple of Tanah Lot. The latter is a huge statue in the form of a national symbol with adjacent cultural centre (uncompleted to this day).

who have been subjected to mass-touristic exploitation and national integration.

There have not only been protests and debates, but also a number of alternative tourism concepts have been actively established in response to the developments outlined above (Rieländer, 2000, pp. 41-43; Waldner, 1998, p. 122 & pp. 126-128). Among them, community-based tourism (CBT), ecotourism, and agritourism became the most prominent forms in Bali. Such are usually labelled as responsible, controlled, small-scale, people-to-people, or green (Backes & Goethe, 2003, p. 17; Beyer, 2006, p. 128; Fennel, 2008, p. 5; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008, pp. 11-13 & p. 27). In 2002 the community-based ecotourism (CBET) village network *Jaringan Ekowisata Desa* (JED) was established by four village communities on the islands of Bali and Nusa Ceningan. In opposition to conventional mass tourism, the grassroots initiative aims at creating tourism “by and for the people” (JED, 2007). Its major goal is to establish tourism development which is planned and managed by the local community. Minimal negative social and environmental impact is sought in combination with generation of incomes and funds for community-development. Further, the initiative aims at fostering cross-cultural understanding through discussions between hosts and guests.

The present article and case study is based on fieldwork that took place in Bali for six weeks from January to February 2010. It looks at the development of community-based ecotourism from the perspective of social sciences and South-East Asian studies. Thereby it examines the research question of whether and to what extent CBET initiatives such as JED constitute a sustainable alternative to the predominant mass tourism developments for a tropical island such as Bali. With the ‘Brundtland Report’ in 1987 and the birth of the concept of Sustainable Development as a new paradigm, various existing forms of alternative tourism in the 1990s converged in the term ‘Sustainable Tourism’ (cf. Shaw & Williams, 2002, p. 302).

Sustainable development is defined by the WCED as a development that “meets the goals of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p. 48). In accord with this definition, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) define sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and the communities” (UNWTO & UNEP, 2005, p. 12). It should make optimal use of environmental resources, respect

the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, provide socio-economic benefits to all its stakeholders and guarantee their participation through strong political leadership. However, tourism has so far played a very controversial role in development with manifold effects upon host destinations. Thus, before the research question is addressed, an overview of the effects of tourism in Bali and respective challenges for the sustainable development of the island shall be outlined in its economic, social and ecological dimensions. Within this, differing global, national, and local interests shall be taken into consideration.

3. Tourism's Effects on the Island - Sustainability Issues Between Global, National, and Local Interests

3.1. The Effects of Tourism in the Dimensions of Sustainability

3.1.1. Economic Dimension

The tourism industry is one of the largest industries in the world. Employment, foreign exchange, and multiplier effects are major reasons for developing country governments to utilise it as a development agent (Radetzki-Stenner, 1989, pp. 24-26; Waldner, 1998, pp. 25-26). In Indonesia, it is the country's second largest foreign exchange earner; the island of Bali has the major share of that (United Nations Development Programme & World Bank (UNDP & WB), 2003, p. i). The 'invisible export' industry has a relatively long supply-chain with several corporate intermediaries; but a high leakage rate caused by the import of goods for tourist consumption is one among the undesired effects (Forbes, 2007, p. 153; Strasdas, 2001, pp. 79-80). Yet, there is no doubt that the tourism industry has induced a significant rise in living standards and incomes through entrepreneurial action and employment generation on the island (Ostrom, 2000, p. 113; Rieländer, 1998, pp. 55-57; Vickers, 1989, pp. 199-200). Before the downturn in tourist arrivals caused by the 2002 and 2005 terrorist attacks, Bali's poverty rate was at only 4 percent compared to 16 percent for Indonesia as a whole (UNDP & WB, 2003, p. i). On the other hand, the economic development causes pressures, for example on farmers because of a competition for resources such as land and water. The decrease in agricultural land and the shift from the primary to the tertiary sector also had serious consequences with regards to the self-sufficiency of

agricultural products on the island (cf. Latimer, 1985, p. 32 & p. 41; Utama, 2007, p. 6). Another disadvantageous structural aspect of tourism as a developing agent is that economic mono-structures are being established, with a strong dependency on the success of the tourism industry. This consequently increases the vulnerability in the case of economic or political crises that lead to a downturn in tourist arrivals, as observed in Bali twice after 2002 and 2005 (Beyer, Häusler, & Strasdas, 2007, pp. 20-21). A matter of heavy debate is the question whether generally larger, internationally operated resorts or smaller, local-run hospitality enterprises contribute to a more equitable distribution of wealth among the broader society (cf. Fuchs & Lengefeld, 2005).

3.1.2. Ecological Dimension

The development of tourism and related activities also has manifold impacts on ecosystems including man-made ones such as agriculture. Also in Bali, economic benefits have come with environmental costs (Cukier-Snow & Wall, 1993, p. 197). Stress to the natural environment is caused through dedicated infrastructures, changes in land-use, the consumption of resources, and the generation of waste (Fennel, 2008, p. 52). With insufficient waste management schemes on the island, pollution is rampant. Waste can be found while walking along river gorges or while swimming in the ocean. Low awareness further adds to the problem. Additional 'imported' waste for the tourism industry in combination with the unresolved question of its processing is a major environmental problem (Fennel, 2008, p. 52; Larenz, 2005; Waldner, 1998, pp. 379-380). Traffic, poor air quality, and noise in urban areas add to this. Also coastal degradation and coral reef destruction are well recorded (Wong, 2001, pp. 218-219). These latter problems have resulted from the mining of the reefs for building material during the construction boom (Hitchcock & Putra, 2007, p. 24). Freshwater is among the most pressing issues, with golf courses and hotel swimming pools evaporating immense amounts of it and holiday makers using several times the daily amount of water they would use at home (TIES, 2006, p. 1; Wong, 2004, pp. 427-429). In Bali this poses not only serious threats to crop and rice cultivation, but has led to subsiding groundwater levels and salt-water intrusion which continues to threaten mangrove forests (Cukier-Snow & Wall, 1993, p. 197; Forbes, 2007, p. 153; Waldner, 1998, p. 31 & 361 & 367). Experience has shown that sprawling tourism development

goes along with the destruction of biotopes, deforestation, a loss in biodiversity and wildlife habitats, erosion, reductions in the resource base, and environmental pollution (Shaw & Williams, 2002, p. 305). The ecological consequences of mass tourism in Bali are strikingly threatening the sustainable development of the island destination.

3.1.3. Socio-Cultural Dimension

Tourism also affects social dimensions. Changing consumption patterns, the creation of new inequalities, the destruction of traditional values and social stability, the profanisation and the commodification of cultural customs, and even prostitution and crime are often mentioned as being, at least partially, caused through it (Neudorfer, 2006, pp. 63-64; Radetzki-Stenner, 1989, p. 55; Strasdas, 2001, pp. 82-84; Wall & Matieson, 2006, pp. 242-244 & p. 259). In Bali, there are also tensions caused by the rising influx of immigrants from other regions in Indonesia.

A prominent discourse on tourism and society has evolved in Bali since tourism's early beginnings and turn until today on concerns over cultural commodification and the question of whether the Balinese culture is able to survive the vigorous changes associated with tourism (cf. Picard, 1996, p. 22 & p. 91). It has been feared, for example, that through shortened dance performances for tourists the line between sacred and profane may be lost and that the Balinese would lose their 'Balineseness' (*Kebalian*) (Picard, 1996, pp. 134-163; Shepperd, 2001, p. 71). In opposition, scholars such as Wood claim that tourism has immense potential to let traditions prosper through the attribution of economic value to it (Wood, 1980, p. 567). A stronger solidarity among *banjar*³ and more extensive ceremonies and offerings have indeed been observed since tourism has flourished (McTaggart, 1980, p. 464; Williams & Putra, 1997, p. 6).

Already in the 1990s, when the debates addressed the outcomes of the master plan and the Nusa Dua venture, Picard disclaimed the static view of culture and society, that tourism is a purely external force that impacts a community. Instead, the Balinese played an active role in the process of "touristification" (Picard, 1996; also Rubinstein & Connor, 1999, p. 2). Many scholars conclude that tourism has neither

3 *Banjar* are social organisations on the neighbourhood-level. Yet they are not necessarily territorial structures. Usually it is married men who become members, and are presided over by a *banjar* head. A *banjar* is regarded as the most important reference group in the life of the Balinese. Members have legal, fiscal, and ritual responsibilities towards the customary institution.

destroyed nor revived the Balinese traditional culture, but that it has created consciousness among the Balinese with regards to their identity and to tourism development (Hitchcock, King, & Parnwell, 2009, pp. 13-19; King, 2009, p. 46). Generally, reactions to tourism development among host societies may cover the full range from euphoria to apathy and antagonism (Fennel, 2008, p. 47). Even the occurrence of social conflicts at host destinations is observed. Yet, their roots also need to be considered in connection with other dimensions, such as the ecological or economic aspects, when they occur around natural resources or land-use issues for instance (Wong, 2004, pp. 427-129).

3.2. Diverging Interests on the Global, National, and Local Level

In all three dimensions – the economic, the social, and the ecological – there are both positive and negative effects. Those that remain unclear are subject to heavy debate or have brought about blatant contradistinctive empirical evidence (Stradas, 2001, p. 77 & 79). While the economic effects of tourism development could be considered, if not necessarily leading to equitable benefits, at least predominantly positive, the social effects are heavily discussed, while the ecological effects tend to be primarily negative, apart from existing potential for environmental protection and conservation. However, there are diverging and conflicting interests on the global, national and local levels.

During the 'Modernisation Paradigm' developing country governments together with the global tourism industry were eager to utilise tourism as a means for economic development and national integration. In the first development decades after World War II, tourism was understood as a 'smokeless' industry that would cause a trickle-down effect distributing wealth among the broader society. However, economic growth turned out not to be tantamount to a rising real income of local people, and ecological and social impacts were higher than expected (Sahli & Nowak, 2007, p. 426). Supporters of the dependency theories saw reasons for the 'underdevelopment' of the respective countries in structural aspects not only within but also between the developing and the developed countries. They described a situation of exploitation of weaker countries by stronger ones in a neo-colonial sense. Finally, both paradigms were ousted by economic neo-liberalism. Usually it is governments

that are in charge of setting the legal framework, and thus directing the development process and the planning of respective strategies for the tourism sector. Especially in many developing nations, legal frameworks and enforcement are still weak. Global or transnational corporations in the tourism business experience a power-gain through their cross-border operation. Thus, it is often civil society organisations and NGOs that not only fulfil a watchdog and advocacy function, but also become actively involved in promoting sustainable forms of tourism and building initiatives and respective projects (Scheyvens, 2002, pp. 210-223).

4. The Community-Based Ecotourism Village-Network *Jaringan Ekowisata Desa*

Martha Honey defines ecotourism as comprising

travel to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas that strives to be low impact and (often) small scale. It helps educate the traveller, provides funds for conservation, directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities, and fosters respect for different cultures and for human rights. (Honey, 2008, pp. 32-33)

Reasons why communities want to become involved are for example tourism development related growth, awareness of the values of natural assets at the locale, empathy for conservation, or a perceived need for sustainable tourism practices at the destination (Wearing & Neil, 2009, p. 119). The focus of community-based tourism (CBT) lies on ownership and decision making power within the sphere of the community (Scheyvens, 1999, p. 245; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008, p. 117). Suansri defines it as

tourism that takes environmental, social and cultural sustainability into account. It is managed and owned by the community, for the community, with the purpose of enabling visitors to increase their awareness and learn about the community and local ways of life. (Suansri, 2003, p. 15)

It aims at the economic self-reliance of communities, their ecological sustainability, self-determination, and local control, meeting individual needs and fostering the respective culture (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008, p. 123).

The community-based ecotourism (CBET) village network *Jaringan Ekowisata Desa* (JED) is one of the initiatives that emerged in response to mass tourism developments

in Bali. The communities were cooperating with the NGOs Wisnu Foundation⁴ and Kehati Foundation⁵ on environmental protection and biodiversity issues when they became affected by conflicts with private interests over local resources in connection with the development of tourism facilities (Atmaja, 2002, p. 41 & p. 81; Warren, 2005, p. 33). In response to that, and following the idea of developing a community-based form of tourism, local interests were becoming promoted instead of being ignored. The grassroots project was officially founded in 2002 under the legal form of a cooperative consisting of farmers from the villages and the local NGO Wisnu Foundation. The project is rooted in the customary organisations of four Balinese village communities, among them social and religious organisations such as the various *banjar*, *subak*⁶, and temple congregations. It aims to be “a strong statement from four communities who want to decide for themselves the future of their people, their culture and their environment” (JED, 2007). The products are marketed through a JED sales office in Seminyak. Visitor figures can thus be controlled. Cooperation with the private sector is being considered, but has not yet been decided on. The sale of tours generates individual income as well as collective funds for community development and environmental conservation. Those are understood as a supplement rather than an entirely new source of income. Also networking, education, and cross-cultural understanding between hosts and guests are facilitated. An important principle is the transparent and democratic decision making process on the local level. The minimisation of negative environmental impacts is sought through the use of existing facilities and by keeping the project “by and for the people”, that is to say small-scale and in accordance with visitors’ and communities’ needs (JED, 2007). From 2002 to 2009 JED has received 449 visitors (Jaya, 2010).

The network comprises Kiadan Pelaga in Central Bali, Dukuh Sibetan and Tenganan Pegringsingan in East Bali, and Nusa Ceningan, a small islet 12 kilometres off the southeast coast. Those remote areas within about two to three hours of driving from the tourist centres in the island’s south are often referred as ‘the traditional Bali’. The mainstay of the local economy here is agriculture, and living standards are low. In

4 <http://www.wisnu.or.id/>

5 <http://www.kehati.or.id/>

6 A *subak* is a socio-religious association of land owners, mortgagees, tenant farmers, and share-croppers. A *subak*’s main function is usually the irrigation of wet-rice land belonging the respective water-temples. Also the elaboration of regulations regarding general agricultural land-use and conflict resolution are important functions. Lansing has extensively researched and published on the *subak* system (e.g. Lansing, 1991).

Kiadan Pelaga there is not even running water for each household, but only communal water spigots. All villages offer trekking tours, demonstrations of local farming practices, arts and crafts production, insights into and involvement in everyday life, local food, and, with the exception of Tenganan, accommodation at home-stays to their guests. In Kiadan Pelaga guests visit plantations and learn how organic coffee is produced. In Dukuh Sibetan the cultivation of snake-fruit is demonstrated. Tenganan is famous for its cloth production and for its palm leaf writing technique *lontar*. Guests to the ancient village learn about its history and its unique cultural practices. On Nusa Ceningan tourists join farmers in their boats on the coral reef to see the farming practices for seaweed. A strong focus in the visitor experience is its educational component. During a visit of the village environs, gardens, plantations, and forest trails, guests receive explanations on agricultural production, resource management, and environmental issues. Agriculture is performed in accordance with the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy. This Balinese concept aims at bringing about human well-being through regulating the spheres of relationships between humans and gods, among humans, and between humans and their natural environment and other creatures (Hauser-Schäublin, 2000, p. 145). This comprises the sustainable use of natural resources. One of the respondents during a field survey said, “We do not take too much; people know that if we destroy our environment, there will be no land to let us make our offerings” (farmer and stakeholder from Kiadan Pelaga, personal communication, 22 January 2010). Also organic farming practices, for example the shade-growing of coffee in mixed-crop gardens with reduced fertiliser and pesticide use, are understood as a more sustainable approach to agriculture.

5. Fieldwork and Methodology

In order to evaluate how far JED constitutes a sustainable alternative to the predominant mass-tourism developments on Bali, an intensive literature review has been combined with three empirical instruments applied during the field phase: participant observation, a community survey, and a client survey. At the beginning of each field trip the author participated as a tourist, experienced the product, and observed whether it matched with the descriptions found in information material and literature.

While the participant observation was intended to be merely a first approach in order to get a better understanding of the field, the community survey aimed at analysing whether community needs and environmental requirements as basic prerequisites for sustainable tourism development are met. For this purpose, the performance was measured against the principles identified by Honey (1999) for ecotourism and by Suansri (2003) for CBT. This comprised aspects of environmental protection and impact minimisation, economic aspects of the initiative as well as social aspects, cultural issues, ownership, decision making, participation, and institutional aspects. The community survey in the four villages was conducted within a time frame of two weeks. As baseline data was not available and a quantitative survey would have neglected social and cultural dimensions, a qualitative survey was done in the form of guided interviews with stakeholders involved with JED. Most of them were farmers; some had other occupations such as teacher or nurse. Some acted purely in their role as an individual, others also held official roles as *banjar* head, village priest, or leader of an agricultural cooperative. With regards to JED they were engaged as guides, cooks, or home-stay owners. Access was established with the help of the Wisnu Foundation. As not all persons in the respective communities had sufficient knowledge, a theoretical sampling process with reliability of data as relevant criterion for the selection of respondents was chosen (cf. Flick, 2002, p. 102-105). A total of 16 interviews (n=16) was generated across all villages of the network: 16 percent of the about 100 people who are involved directly with JED. The interviews with respondents were performed in the national language Bahasa Indonesia with the help of an interpreter.

In order to evaluate the overall fulfilment of tourists' needs a qualitative client survey was performed. As the field period did not allow for an independent survey with an amount of questionnaires that would allow for significant results, existing evaluation questionnaires provided by JED were analysed. They are part of JED's quality control and serve marketing activities. They provide a visitor typology and assess client satisfaction. The former is generated through general demographic and personal information such as age, sex, nationality, number of visits to Bali, and the length of stay. The latter is achieved through ratings of different aspects of the product quality, such as satisfaction with guides, gained knowledge, interaction, food, trekking experience, and value for money. The questionnaires also comprised section with opportunity to provide suggestions and open answers. The 165 analysed

questionnaires had been collected by JED from December 2007 to December 2009. The sample size accounts for 37 percent of JED' total visitors as at the end of 2009 (Byczek, 2011, p. 96).

6. Outcomes of the Case Study

6.1. The Participant Observation

The participant observation showed that descriptions existing in information material and the literature broadly correspond with the reality of the tourism product. Insights into local life were plenty and compared to many other ecotourism products the knowledge and awareness gained on environmental and social issues at the visited villages were inspiring.

6.2. The Community Survey

The community survey revealed remarkable achievements, especially when taking into consideration the limited funds and the basal presuppositions (Byczek, 2011, p. 102). Often the criticism is made that small-scale and grassroots initiatives lack knowledge on the workings of the tourism industry and marketing skills or are unable to control tourism development (Scheyvens, 2002, p. 124; Schmitz, 2005, p. 193; Strasdas, 2001, p. 244). For JED, such a lack cannot be attested. On the contrary, there is much awareness among the stakeholders about tourism and its consequences. One respondent mentioned that "the most important thing is awareness and knowledge of the people about tourism and ecotourism; before, they did not even understand what tourism is" (stakeholder from Dukuh Sibetan, personal communication, 31 January 2010). Economic gains through ecotourism activities are generated in all of the four villages. A share of the profits is divided among community institutions, such as the *banjar*, agricultural co-operatives, or temple congregations. They are used for the renovation of facilities, collective work, meetings or ceremonies. Depending on the community, 10 to 21 individuals get recurring employment through JED. These comprise local guides, cooks, farmers, home-stay owners, or community members receiving incentives for the use of their property or for demonstrations. The incomes

account for USD 3-15 per assignment, which is irregular due to a rotation system. The fact that local guides are employed is indicative for empowerment. One of the respondents mentioned that everything is “owned and managed locally and for the local people” (stakeholder from Nusa Ceningan, personal communication, 15 February 2010). Also the example of Nusa Ceningan exemplifies such processes. The respondents explained that they have fought off an investor that was intending to privatise the island and resettle the population. A local resident comments on the – at least temporary – discontinuation of the plans: “Would the company have bought it [the island] the local people would have lost their land and culture” (farmer and stakeholder from Nusa Ceningan, personal communication, 16 February 2010). Also he mentions that, instead, “with a locally owned tourism model the farmers do not need to ask the investor for beach access” (farmer and stakeholder from Nusa Ceningan, personal communication, 16 February 2010). The issue of empowerment in many communities in Bali turns on the conflict and debates on the path of large-scale tourism development. It is actually a conflict over entitlements to natural and cultural resources decided through the form of control over them.

With regards to the environmental dimension, JED’s outcomes are still somewhat limited. Asked for active measures of environmental protection at the project sites many respondents did not name concrete measures. Still, negative impacts are minimised in line with what the criteria for ecotourism demand. Only existing facilities are used and the activities are kept small-scale. A respondent said in this connection, “We do not want to change the environment, we want to remain farmers; we do not want to change all to tourism” (farmer and stakeholder from Kiadan Pelaga, personal communication, 21 January 2010). A positive mechanism that Hampton notes also for other places in Indonesia is that CBET encourages the cleaning of village environs and establishment of local waste management schemes (Hampton, 2003, p. 93). As a major topic, a strong connection to their ‘land’, or rather to land-use and sustainable agricultural practices, was established by the respondents, for example by saying, “according to some people tourism means money – they sell their land; we still need to improve local awareness, for our heritage, which is a sustainable way of life” (farmer and stakeholder from Kiadan Pelaga, personal communication, 21 January 2010). With the culture and the human-ecology system in Bali based on agriculture, the religious practices, ecological concerns, and debates have to be understood in

connection with cultural practices, concerns, and debates (Picard, 1990, pp. 1-2). This fact helps to explain why these issues in Bali cannot be considered separately and why quantitative indicator frameworks for the analysis of such topics would not make much sense. Despite certain constraints with regards to active protection, the minimisation of those negative environmental impacts through tourism development is well fulfilled by JED.

CBT needs to raise the quality of life, promote community pride, and divide roles fairly between men and women and young and old (Sunasri, 2003, p. 22). According to Honey, ecotourism needs to respect local culture (Honey, 2008, pp. 29-31). Sunasri differentiates this into the encouragement of respect for different cultures, the fostering of cultural exchange, and the embedding of development into the local culture (Sunasri, 2003, p. 22). Especially the softer notions in many comments of respondents revealed that such aspects needed to be understood in a holistic sense. Many respondents reported that the most important gain is that of awareness and knowledge and that through the pioneering approach their community is considered as the “leading . . . of all the *banjars* in the village” (farmer and stakeholder from Dukuh Sibetan, personal communication, 30 January 2010). This concerns also the attention of the local governments and their planning activities. Even though it is hard to always demonstrate concrete and measurable results, many positive outcomes have been and are being achieved. The length of stay with JED is usually quite short, with daytrips and two-day trips being offered. The criticism can be made that there is not enough time for exchange and a deeper understanding between the cultures (cf. Sunasri, 2003, pp. 19-20 & p. 71). In this regard the interviews brought mixed results. Generally, the culture of the guests and their behaviour are described as positive. As the clientele has higher educational levels, interaction and mutual exchange is well fostered. Grounded in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, gender equality is an important indicator for sustainable development. In Balinese society, women and men are regarded as equal but different counterparts, as reflected in the expressions made by the respondents (cf. Ariani & Kindon, 1995, p. 513). Such statements are often criticised, as in practice the genders take over different responsibilities and, as *banjar* and *subak* members, only men take part in the decision-making process (Ariani & Kindon, 1995, pp. 511-512; Cukier-Snow & Wall, 1993, p. 201). In contrast to *banjar* meetings, the regular stakeholder meetings of JED invite females

to join, express their opinion, and actively take part in decision-making. Even though to a lesser extent than men, women also take part in tourism activities. A female respondent confidentially commented, “I myself do cooking and home-stay; I could not become a guide, because of my job as nurse, but I would be interested; unfortunately I speak little English, but I can offer accommodation” (stakeholder from Nusa Ceningan, personal communication, 16 February 2010).

Participation is a general prerequisite for the expression of human needs and thus a key element of any CBT initiative (Beyer et al., 2007, p. 47). In the context of Bali, the decision-making process is based upon consensus. Final choices are usually made by the heads of the respective organisations, e.g. the *banjar* after hearing the opinions of all members. Examined with the eyes of Palm (2000), who has been doing research on participation issues in CBT, such an approach would have to be graded among the higher levels of participation considered when analysing different approaches in tourism. There are no foreign advisors implementing the activities, but it is the community members themselves consulting each other and taking proactive measures. With the mentioned constraints with regards to gender equality in mind, the initiative could thus be considered as a democratic movement in itself, as stipulated by Honey (2008, pp. 29-31).

6.3. The Client Survey

The client typology of JED revealed the typical age structure, interests and duration of stay of what can be considered an ‘ecotourist’. Usually this is a tourist of middle to senior age, from a developed nation, with likely a tertiary education, a higher than average income, an intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation to travel, and a longer duration of stay. The clientele does frequently consist of opinion leaders that function as multipliers (Stradas, 2001, p. 135; TIES, 2006, p. 3; Wearing & Neil, 2009, p. 196-198; Weaver, 2001, p. 40). The countries of origin correspond with the major ecotourism markets. However, ecotourism is a broad phenomenon with many nuances. Guests of JED are usually picked up at ‘starred’ resorts. And of course, the fact also needs to be acknowledged that the carbon footprints of their flights have a negative contribution to the overall eco-balance and that their stay in Bali further puts pressure on the carrying capacity of the island as a whole (cf. Johnson & Cottingham,

2008, pp. 1-6). Visitor satisfaction is positive throughout (Byczek, 2011, pp. 119-125). With 77 percent the great majority of guests rate the quality of the services as either very good or good. Local guides, food and drink, as well as trekking were appreciated most. Agriculture and religious ceremonies also attracted among the highest levels of positive response. Suggestions and open answers indicated that JED should “keep up the good work”. Also some weaknesses, such as remaining garbage in some areas of the villages were mentioned as well as possible improvements to product and service quality.

In conclusion, a great job has been done by the stakeholders of JED in establishing a superb tourism product that fulfils the needs of the communities as well of those of the tourists to a high degree without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The economic gain is still small. But in any case it is meant to be a supplement and diversification of the community income rather than an entirely new source creating also new dependencies. Active environmental protection is constrained but impact minimisation in the development of tourism has been considered. The use of only existing facilities in combination with sustainable land-use and resource management fulfils this criterion well. Further, the number of visitors is under the control of the initiative’s own sales office. Negative social impact is also largely avoided in this way. Through being based on customary social organisations, the decision making process offers a high degree of empowerment on the local level. Local Balinese institutions have proven suitable in fulfilling the criteria of sustainable tourism.

7. Community-Based Ecotourism for Bali - Blessings for All?

Fieldwork in Bali has shown that alternative tourism is perceived in stark contrast to mass tourism. Yet in fact, mass tourism and sustainable tourism are not strictly opposites, but overlapping and interrelated (Fennel, 2008, p. 4 & pp. 15-16). Besides that, unsustainable practices can be found in ecotourism and sustainable practices can be found in mass tourism. Tourism is first and foremost an industry, and like any other industry it is dependent on the exploitation of resources. In the case of JED, the initiative even lives on mass tourism. Cases have been observed where CBT has served as ‘launch pad’ for mass tourism (Pleumarom, 2002, p. 7). This happens when people

cannot oversee or control the consequences of tourism development (Strasdas, 2001, p. 244). The history of JED in Bali has shown that the opposite can also be the case. The network has been established in response to already existing mass tourism.

The link between tourism development and environmental protection in the case presented has been rather weak and of an indirect nature (Byczek, 2011, p. 106). However, the maintenance of sustainable farming practices and the retention of land among stakeholders are strong factors preventing negative effects usually associated with uncontrolled development. With their CBET initiative as alternative to the mega-projects of the conglomerates, the farmers have gained much awareness among their communities and contributed to the creation of an 'agency' for sustainability in Bali, as described in similar ways by King (2009, p. 53). A farmer says in this regard, "Some of us have become a pioneer on the island in this field" (stakeholder from Nusa Ceningan, personal communication, 15 February 2010).

Often it is discerned that less negative impacts also mean less positive impacts – a connection commonly identified as the "tourism development dilemma" (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008, p. 28). Alternative tourism has been criticised as being no more than "just that: an alternative, rather than a solution, to the 'problem' of mass tourism" (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008, p. 41). Aside from the fact that a separation between 'good' and 'bad' forms of tourism is already controversial, JED also cannot be a solution to the problems associated with mass tourism in Bali. However, it is still an alternative that fosters sustainable development and bears potential to serve broader social interests.

As an alternative to mass tourism, CBET development can and should only be a supplement for local communities to achieve development. First, it cannot be expected that farmers or fishermen can quickly advance into typical tourism occupations, such as guiding or hospitality operations (Wearing & Neil, 2009, p. 127). Second, it would be immoderate to expect that small-scale tourism operations can solve the structural problems of a whole industry. And third, the goal behind the initiative is a diversification of income rather than the creation of new dependencies through mono-structural and crisis-prone industries.

Sustainable development also requires other institutional and structural conditions to be favourable (Fariborz, Sarjit, & Farshid, 2010, p. 158). Adept legal frameworks and feasible master plans are important instruments (Strasdas, 2001, p. 61 &

pp. 65-69; Apostolopoulus & Gayle, 2002, p. 115). Unfortunately, in the course of the recent Indonesian decentralisation and democratisation tendencies of the *Reformasi* era, authority was not given to the provincial governments, but to the authorities on the regency level (*kabupaten*). This resulted in a competition between the regencies for tax income through the attraction of new tourism developments and again in a strong increase in the development of tourism facilities in Bali throughout the past decade (Connor & Vickers, 2003, p. 173; Picard, 2003, p. 115). Regional autonomy in this connection has missed its goal for sustainable tourism development in Bali as it hinders the understanding of tourism as a provincial asset (Koch, 2007, pp. 92-92; Picard, 2003, p. 115; UNDP, 2003, p. 60). The planned privatisation of Nusa Ceningan was one such example for investments that had been backed by the local government until a long conflict between the island community and the property developers led to a reassessment. Similar conflicts had existed in all of the four JED villages. The people of Nusa Ceningan were able to – at least for the time being – avert the acquisition of plots of public land by private investors and the construction of a mega-resort. By implementing small-scale and low-impact CBET activities they have gained additional income that stays entirely in the community instead of losing their access to the seaweed-farms and their livelihoods to the benefits of cash-rich non-Balinese investors and ‘big men from Jakarta’.

In tourist areas, there are often “fundamental conflicts between land as a symbol and cultural resource on the one hand and its pivotal role as a commodity in neo-liberal economic development agendas on the other” (Warren, 2005, p. 31). Agriculture, once the mainstay of the Balinese economy, has become neglected during tourism-driven development. This process has separated many Balinese from their cultural and spiritual roots (McRae, 2005, pp. 209-211 & p. 227; Tambunan, 2007, p. 22). By implementing CBET the people of Bali and Nusa Ceningan have created a lobby against external interests that are conflicting with community needs and local livelihoods. The rather philosophical question raised by Vorlauffer of whether projects like JED are a form of cultural renaissance or are instead a struggle for survival of the ‘traditional sector’ is hard to answer (Vorlauffer, 1999, p. 42). For sure, JED needs to be understood also in connection with what Warren describes as ‘*adat*’ revival’, aiming at an

7 *Adat* is mostly translated as customary traditions or customary law. In the Indonesian use of language, the meaning of *adat* is very comprehensive, further including customs, practices, and habits.

increase of local control over resources and the restoration of local *adat* authority after a long phase of “Indonesianization” (Warren, 2005, p. 29 & 32).

Tourism is “one of the dimensions of globalization par excellence”, as Hitchcock, King, and Parnwell (2009, p. 28) put it, and Bali has thereby become a real ‘global’ island. Thus, the debates about outside agents of change are also closely linked to what is criticised in Indonesia as *globalisasi*, referring to forces that remain largely out of the control of the people (Apostolopoulos & Gayle, 2002, p. 156 & 181; Ostrom, 2000; Rubinstein & Connor, 1999, p. 5). Thus, JED can be understood not only as an opposition to urges for tourism development by the local and national governments and the international “tour operator hegemony” (Apostolopoulos & Gayle, 2002, p. 156 & 181) but also to globalising forces in connection with TNC’s, the WB, IMF, and the WTO, as Atmaja notes (Atmaja, 2002, p. 148). It is also an attempt to redraw the “imaginary map of colonial and neo-colonial relations”, as Allon refers to tourism development on Bali generally (Allon, 2004, p. 38).

Linking the connections between tourism, the environment, and globalisation, Wong cites Pleumarom by saying, with reference to South-East Asia, that

authority over resources for tourism and any kind of development is to be maintained by governments vis-à-vis the powerful interests of the global tourism industry, and, equally important, needs to be handed down to local communities, before sustainable tourism alternatives can be delivered. (Wong, 2001, p. 217)

JED has successfully fostered voice and decision-making at the local level. Social capital lacking in many other initiatives has in Bali resulted from the project being rooted in customary social organisations such as the *banjar* and proven very successful (Jones, 2005, p. 305 & pp. 319-320; Suansri, 2003, p. 24). To this extent it is a big step in the right direction with regards to sustainable tourism development in Bali (Atmaja, 2002, p. 145). The Wisnu Foundation is currently preparing a plan for additional communities to create an island-wide CBET network under the name Bali Dwe (Bali Dwe, 2010).

The benefit of an initiative such as JED goes beyond direct and easily measurable economic, social, and environmental impacts. The results of the field research have shown that it is necessary to link the initiative theoretically to the broader discourse and debates on tourism development in Bali. As tourism is a ubiquitous phenomenon

on the island, it always needs to be seen in the wider context. The gain in consciousness among the broader population constitutes a presupposition for future political agendas and empowerment.

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